

Docket Item #8
BAR CASE# 2005-0055

BAR Meeting
March 23, 2005

ISSUE: Addition and alterations

APPLICANT: Nensi Fiorenini & Scott Singleton

LOCATION: 421 North Fayette Street

ZONE: RB/Residential

****EXPIRATION OF APPROVALS NOTE:** In accordance with Sections 10-106(B) and 10-206(B) of the Zoning Ordinance, any official Board of Architectural Review approval will expire 12 months from the date of issuance if the work is not commenced and diligently and substantially pursued by the end of that 12-month period.

****BUILDING PERMIT NOTE:** Most projects approved by the Board of Architectural Review require the issuance of one or more construction permits by the Code Enforcement Bureau (including signs). The applicant is responsible for obtaining all necessary construction permits after receiving Board of Architectural Review approval. Contact Code Enforcement, Room 4200, City Hall, 703-838-4360 for further information.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends deferral of the application for restudy. However, should the Board approve the proposed addition at this time, Staff notes the comments of Alexandria Archaeology and recommends that they be included as a condition of the approval:

The following statement must appear in the General Notes of the site plan so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement:

Call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-838-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site and records the finds.

NOTE: Docket item #7 must be approved before this docket item can be considered.

I. ISSUE:

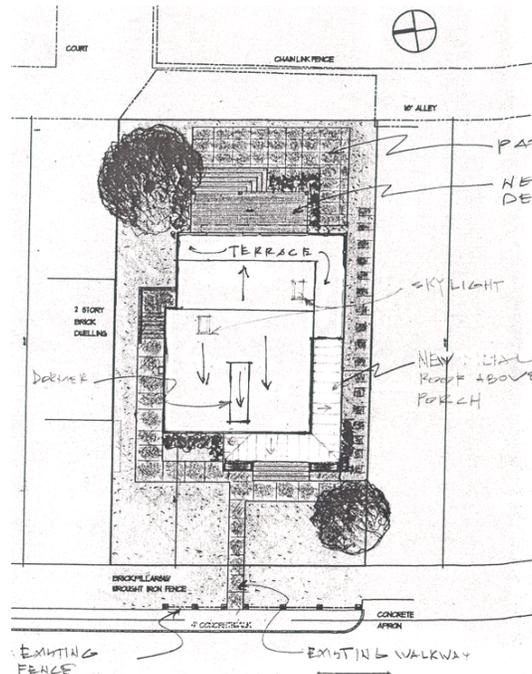


Figure 1 - Roof plan showing new construction

The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for an addition and alterations to the existing two story detached brick house. The existing house has 1953 gross square feet of area. The proposed addition will add 1857 gross square feet. A three story frame addition will be located at the rear (east) elevation and wrap around the southeast corner of the house. The slope of the roof will be raised to accommodate the new third story at the rear of the house. A new single story porch will extend across a portion of the front (west) elevation and turn the corner to extend across a portion of the south side elevation. These major alterations and other minor alterations are described in detail below:

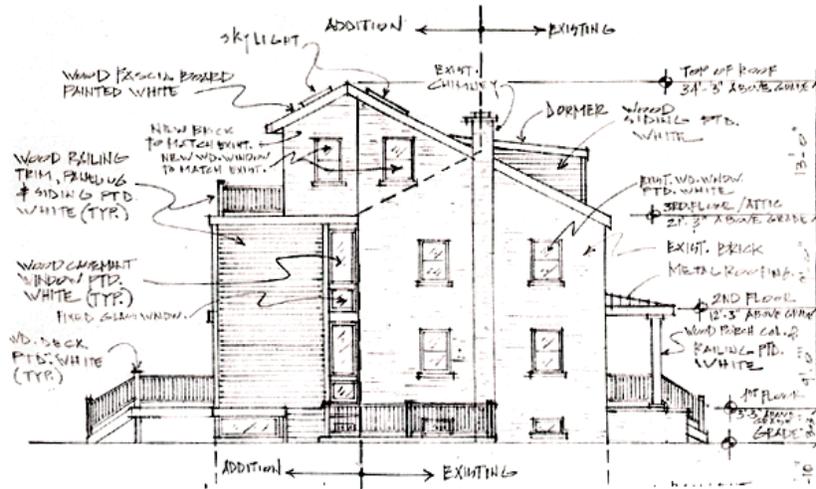


Figure 3 North elevation

North side elevation:

The north elevation of the existing house will remain as is on the first and second stories. The extended roof slope will create a new third story to the east of the centerline. The wall of this new section will be clad in brick to match the existing and will have a wood window matching the existing. Exterior access to the basement will be moved from the rear of the building to the north side. An areaway will be created at the eastern end of the north elevation and will be surrounded by a wood railing. An existing basement window will be converted to a door.

The addition will be set back from the north wall by 2'. The addition will be clad in wood siding on the first and second stories and brick on the third story. The third story will not be as deep as the first and second stories. The top of the second story will be flat, and will be surrounded by a wood railing to serve as a deck for the third story. The third story will be capped with the short slope of the asymmetrical gable roof. There will be a window in the basement level. The first and second stories will be lit by fixed windows located in a strip at the west end of the wall abutting the rear wall of the existing house. These windows will be vertically aligned and will appear as strip, linked by wood panels below the windows and a two story trim board.

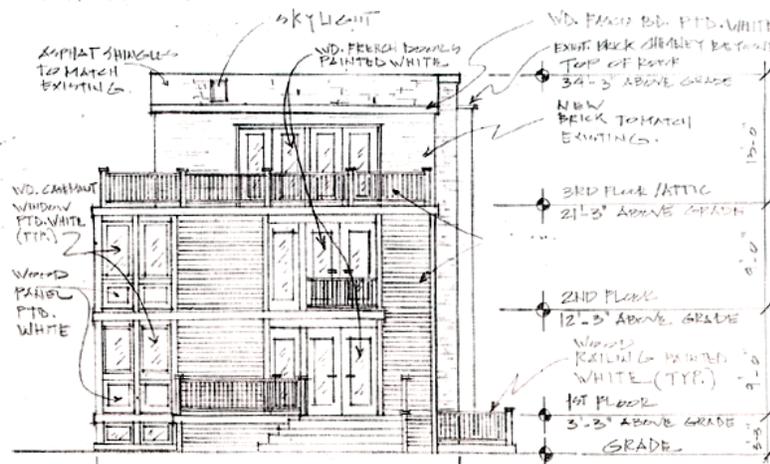


Figure 4 Rear elevation

Rear (east) elevation:

The proposed new construction will obscure all of the existing house at the rear except for a 2' wide section at the north corner. As mentioned above, the addition is offset from the north face of the house by 2' and it extends beyond the south face by 5'6". The addition will be clad in wood siding on the first and second stories and with brick on the third story. The third story will not be as wide or as deep as the addition below. The top of the second story will be flat, and will be surrounded by a wood railing to serve as a deck for the third story. The third story will be capped with the short slope of the asymmetrical gable roof. The roof will be clad in asphalt shingles to match the existing.

A wood deck with wood railings will extend out from the addition on the first story. The deck will be 3'3" above grade, 21'8 1/2" wide and 8' deep. It will be accessed by a set of broad steps located on the north end. The material of the steps is not indicated on the plans. There will be two windows at the south corner of the addition at basement level. The first and second stories of the addition are treated identically: there will be paired wood casement windows with wood panels below at the south corner and a set of wood fully glazed french doors with a fully glazed sidelight located to the north. The windows and doors in the first and second stories will be aligned vertically. The third story will have two sets of wood fully glazed french doors in the center of the east elevation. There will be a skylight located toward the south end of the roof.

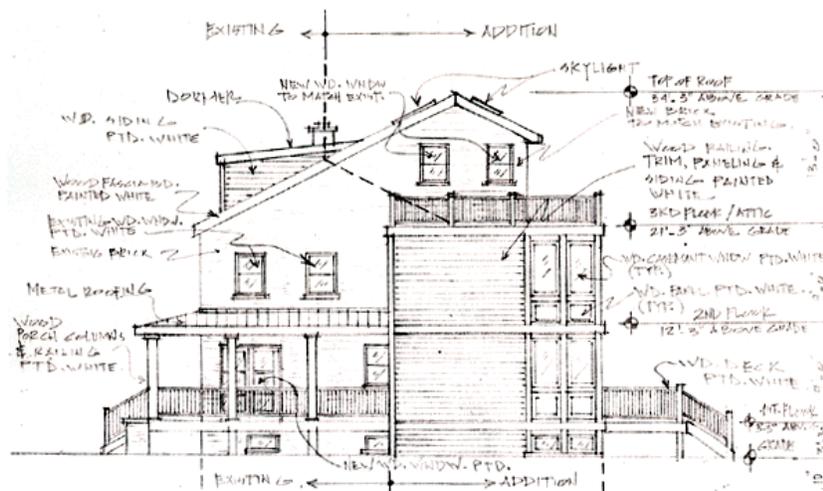


Figure 5 South elevation

South side elevation:

The south elevation will consist of the existing house extended up to three stories at the rear with a brick clad addition with asymmetrical gable roof, the two story frame addition topped with deck and the wrap around porch extending along 2/3 of the first story.

The existing house will have a number of alterations on the south elevation. A pair of new full height windows will replace a single window on the west end of the south elevation on the first story. These windows will be wood, but the configuration and type is unclear. As on the front, the porch will be supported by wood columns with a wood railing and metal clad hip roof. Unlike the front which has a solid brick foundation, the porch will have brick piers on the side.

The new third story extension of the existing house will have two wood windows matching the existing. The two story frame addition will be clad in wood siding and will be identical on the first and second stories. There will be paired wood casement windows with wood panels below at the west corner. There will also be paired windows in the basement level. There will be a deck on the top of the second story which will be surrounded by a wood railing.

All trim and siding will be painted white.

All elevations of the house will be visible from the public right-of-way due to the generous side yards and the public alley at the rear.

II. HISTORY:

As explained in docket item #7, the two story, gable roof, brick house was constructed in 1955 and exhibits minimal Colonial Revival styling. Although the windows and front door have been replaced, there is no record of BAR review for this property. In 2001, the Board approved alterations at 417 North Fayette Street, a neighboring house constructed in 1940 with similar minimal Colonial Revival styling (BAR Case #2001-00144 & 145, 6/27/2001). The project added a portico at the front, porch at the north side and bay at the rear.

III. ANALYSIS:

The proposed addition and alterations comply with the zoning ordinance requirements. The property is classified as a single-family dwelling and can not have an apartment in the basement. The existing basement kitchen must be removed prior to wall check approval and no new kitchen may be installed.

In the opinion of Staff, the proposed addition, as currently designed, is not sufficiently compatible with the houses on the blockface or with the surrounding neighborhood. None of the houses on either side of the 400 block of Fayette Street exceed two stories. All are simple vernacular examples of late Victorian or mid-20th Century Colonial Revival. While the applicants and their architect sought the opinion of Staff and responded to Staff comments to some degree, particularly with regard to using a more traditional vocabulary on the front, Staff believes the addition remains too massive at the back of the house and there remain a number of jarring design elements left from the original strongly modern design.

In particular, Staff objects to the extension of the gable roof to create a third story at the rear. The resulting asymmetrical roofline is peculiar and the mass at the rear of the house overwhelming. Staff notes that the original plans incorporated a two bedroom basement apartment. As a basement apartment is not allowed under zoning, it has been eliminated from the plans, but the space remains, now allocated to storage, workshop and recreation room. Staff wonders if the uses housed in the third story extension could not be accommodated elsewhere, such as in the basement. If the attic story must be used for living purposes, Staff recommends exploring an option with a more conventional and less overwhelming appearance, such as raising the roof equally on both sides to create a steeper gable with a more harmonious appearance and utilizing dormers to add light and headroom.

In addition, Staff has a number of other recommendations to improve the appearance of the project:

- The skylight should be eliminated from the front slope of the roof. According to the *Design Guidelines*, skylights should not be located on the portion of the roof facing the street (Skylights - Page 1).
- The corner windows on the front (west) elevation of the addition should be moved to be centered in the wall. Staff does not object to the use of corner and strip windows in the rear, but believes that at least on the front, the addition should utilize a more traditional vocabulary.
- The full length paired windows proposed for the west end of the south elevation on the first story appear to be left over from a previous iteration of the plans and do not relate to any window type elsewhere on the plans. Staff recommends that the existing single window be retained or that the pair be composed of windows of the same type and size found on the existing house.

Staff notes the Code Enforcement comments. These comments may result in further alteration of the plans.

- The proposed windows on the south elevation of the addition are located at 5' from of the interior lot line. All exterior walls within 5' from an interior property line must have a fire resistance rating of 1 hour from both sides with no openings permitted or a 2 hour fire wall may be provided. Staff recommends that the south wall of the addition be moved back several more inches from the property line to ensure that it meets the code setback requirement when built.
- Alterations may be required to meet emergency escape requirements of the USBC for the basement.
- The submitted plans appear to exceed height and area requirements of the USBC and may require a sprinkler system. Staff notes that sprinkler systems can add substantially to the cost of a project and have caused applicants to reconsider their plans in previous cases.

Given all of the above considerations, Staff believes the proposed addition and alterations should be deferred for restudy. Along with the revised drawings, Staff requests the following additional materials to assist in evaluating the project:

- Cutsheets and or details for the doors, windows, shutters, siding, skylight and exterior lights;
- Details for the front door and surround;
- Details for the railings; and,
- Details for the porch columns.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends deferral of the application for restudy. However, should the Board approve the proposed addition at this time, Staff notes the comments of Alexandria Archaeology and recommends that they be included as a condition of the approval:

The following statement must appear in the General Notes of the site plan so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement:

Call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-838-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site and records the finds.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

Legend: C - code requirement R - recommendation S - suggestion F- finding

Code Enforcement:

- F-1 Proposed windows for kitchens and master bath are located within 5 feet of interior lot line and shall conform to C-1 below.
- F-2 Basement windows are located under flooring of front porch and do not meet emergency escape requirements of the USBC.
- F-3 Submitted plans appear to exceed height and area requirements of the USBC and may require a sprinkler system. Final determination of this requirement will be evaluated at time of building permit application.
- C-1 All exterior walls within 5 feet from an interior property line shall have a fire resistance rating of 1 hour, from both sides, with no openings permitted within the wall. As alternative, a 2 hour fire wall may be provided. This condition is also applicable to skylights within setback distance.
- C-2 Prior to the issuance of a demolition permit or land disturbance permit, a rodent abatement plan shall be submitted to Code Enforcement that will outline the steps that will taken to prevent the spread of rodents from the construction site to the surrounding community and sewers.
- C-3 Roof drainage systems must be installed so as neither to impact upon, nor cause erosion/damage to adjacent property.
- C-4 A soils report must be submitted with the building permit application.
- C-5 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-6 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-7 Construction permits are required for this project. Plans shall accompany the permit application that fully detail the construction as well as layouts and schematics of the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems.
- C-8 Permission from adjacent property owners is required if access to the adjacent properties is required to complete the proposed construction. Otherwise, a plan shall be submitted to demonstrate the construction techniques utilized to keep construction solely on the referenced property.

C-9 A wall location plat prepared by a land surveyor is required to be submitted to this office prior to requesting any framing inspection.

Historic Alexandria:

This certainly changes the look of the streetscape although the porch is somewhat similar to one on the block. A very large addition in comparison to the original building. The front door transforms this from plain vernacular to something more.

Alexandria Archaeology:

- F-1 Historical documents indicate that the block bounded by Fayette, Princess, Henry and Oronoco Streets was the site of the Union Army government bakery during the Civil War. The bakery complex included a large structure for baking, along with storehouses, quarters, a dining house, and a guard house. Although there is no evidence that any of these structures were present on the lot at 421 N. Fayette Street, archaeological resources relating to the bakery and other Civil War military activities could remain buried on the property.
- R-1 Call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-838-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site and records the finds.
- R-2 The above statement must appear in the General Notes of the site plan so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement.